

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7738

INFO AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

AMEMBASSY CARACAS

AMEMBASSY PANAMA

AMCONSUL CALI

AMCONSUL MEDELLIN

UNCLAS BOGOTA 2759

EO 11652: NA

TAGS: PFOR, CO

SUBJ: THEMES OF THE LOPEZ PRESS CONFERENCE IN PANAMA: PANAMA ACCORD,
THE OAS, AND CUBA

1. IN A PRESS CONFERENCE IN PANAMA MARCH 24, 1975
PRESIDENT LOPEZ COMMENTED ON VARIOUS TOPICS, INCLUDING THE
PANAMA AGREEMENT, THE OAS AND CUBA.

2. PANAMA ACCORD. CONCERNING THE FOUR-COUNTRY DECLARATION
ON THE PANAMA CANAL, LOPEZ SPENT CONSIDERABLE TIME TRYING TO
CLARIFY WHAT COLOMBIA HAD ALLEGEDLY "RENOUNCED". HE SAID
"WE SEEM TO BE CONFUSED OVER THE WORD 'RENUNCIATION'." HE
IMPLIED THAT COLOMBIA HAD NOT REALLY RENOUNCED THE URRUTIA-
THOMSON TREATY: "WHAT WE REALLY HAVE RENOUNCED IS THE
RECEIP OF BENEFITS IN THE FUTURE FROM THE UNITED STATES
REGARDING TRANSIT OF THE CANAL AT A TIME WHEN FU UNITED
STATES WILL NO LONGER BE ABLE TO GUARANTEE THEM TO US.
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AT MOMENT, WE WILL RECEIVE THEM FROM THE REPUBLIC OF

PANAMA, WHICH WILL BE RECOVERING COMPLETE JURISDICTION OVER THE TERRITORY"... "SO, IN REALITY WE ARE NOT GIVING UP ANYTHING, ONLY RENOUNCING SOMETHING WHICH, AT THAT TIME, THE UNITED STATES WILL NOT BE ABLE TO GIVE US". REGARDING THE POSSIBILITY OF AN UNFAVORABLE REACTION IN THE U.S. AGAINST THE PANAMA AGREEMENT, LOPEZ SAID: "THE ATTITUDE OF THE UNITED STATES...MUST BE ENTIRELY FAVORABLE BECAUSE WHAT HAS REALLY HAPPENED IS THAT THROUGH THE COMMITMENT WE HAVE JUST SIGNED THE UNITED STATES...IS RELIEVED IN THE FUTURE OF THE DIFFICULTY IT WOULD HAVE HAD TO FACE IN ORDER TO COMPLY WITH THE URRUTIA-THOMSON TREATY IT HAD SIGNED IN 1914". HE SAID THAT COLOMBIA THUS HAD REMOVED ITSELF AS A POSSIBLE OBSTACLE TO AN AGREEMENT BETWEEN PANAMA AND THE U.S. PANAMA'S WILLINGNESS TO ASSUME RESPONSIBILITIES VIS A VIS COLOMBIA AND COSTA RICA, HE SAID, OPENS THE ROAD TO STEPPING UP THE PACE OF THE NEGOTIATING BETWEEN THE U.S. AND PANAMA.

3. OAS. ASKED IF COLOMBIA WOULD CONSIDER WITHDRAWING FROM THE OAS IF THE U.S. MAINTAINED COERCIVE MEASURES AGAINST MEMBER COUNTRIES, LOPEZ RESPONDED: "THIS NOT MY THOUGHT. THE IDEAS SHARED BY ALL MEMBERS IS THAT RATHER THAN DOING WITHOUT THE PRESENCE OF THE UNITED STATES, WE MUST KEEP THE ORGANIZATIONS WITH ALL OF ITS MEMBERS SUBJECTED TO THE SAME RULES, THUS COMPLYING THE STATUS OF THIS ORGANIZATION". IN REPLY TO A QUESTION ABOUT SECRETARY OF STATE KISSINGER'S ALLEGED POLICY OF SEEKING A DIALOGUE WITH LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES OUTSIDE THE FRAMEWORK OF THE OAS, LOPEZ REPEATED COLOMBIA'S OFT-STATED POSITION THAT OAS BUSINESS SHOULD BE CONDUCTED IN THE OAS. HE SAID: "MEMBERS OF A CLUB DO NOT HAVE TO GO TO A CAFE ACROSS THE STREET TO MEET".

4. ON CUBA, LOPEZ SAID THAT THE RENEWAL OF RELATIONS BETWEEN CUBA AND COLOMBIA ELIMINATED AN ARTIFICIAL SITUATION OF APPEARING NOT TO HAVE RELATIONS WHILE CARRYING OUT TRADE. HE SAID THE UNITED STATES HAS BEEN EXPORTING PRODUCTS TO CUBA THROUGH ITS MULTINATIONAL FIRMS IN CANADA AND MEXICO.
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